NWT Community Governments

HUMAN RESOURCES SURVEY

SURVEY REPORT

OCTOBER 2007

LGANT

Local Government Administrators of the NWT

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Executive Summary

In recent years, many community governments in the NWT have experienced difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified personnel to work in key positions within the community government. Factors believed to be contributing to this situation include a booming economy, a shortage of qualified workers and a general inability of community governments to provide competitive remuneration (i.e. wage and benefits) packages.

To better understand the nature of the problem and identify potential solutions, the Local Government Administrators of the NWT (LGANT) decided to undertake a survey of the wage levels, benefits packages and employment policies currently in place across community governments in the NWT. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs provided funding for this project.

The survey, which focused on the key positions within community governments, collected information in three areas: salaries and benefits; employment policies; and general questions on attracting and retaining staff. A total of 26 completed surveys were received from the 33 communities – representing a response rate of 79%.

Some of the main results from the survey include:

- The average time spent by most employees in their positions was approximately 3 years.
- Most communities indicated that they were having either "very little success" or "some success" in attracting and retaining staff. The most important reason for this was the inability to pay competitive salaries and wages.
- Community governments indicated that the top factor which would most assist them in attracting and retaining staff included was the ability to pay competitive salaries/wages. The second most important factor was the ability to provide comprehensive benefits packages.

- All community governments – regardless of size, benefits packages provided, or whether unionized or not – are currently having limited success in attracting and retaining key staff.

- All community governments – regardless of size, benefits packages provided, or whether unionized or not – are currently able to keep the majority of their employees in their positions for roughly the same amount of time (approximately 3 years). The only exception is that providing a northern living allowance appears to lengthen employees' time spent in their positions to approximately 5 years.

These findings give rise to the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

Obtain additional funding to boost salaries and wages for key community government positions so that there is less of a gap between the salaries provided by community governments and those provided by other NWT employers. Also ensure that funding is targeted towards the provision of Northern Living Allowances for staff (which helps keep employees in their positions for longer periods of time).

Recommendation #2

Undertake further study to determine which specific positions, based on a representative sample of community governments from the various regions, are experiencing the most difficulty regarding recruitment and retention within community governments. With this information, a "ballpark" estimate of the cost to implement Recommendation #1 could be more accurately determined. Also ensure that job descriptions and qualifications for key positions are submitted for analysis, so that recommendations regarding the qualifications of candidates can be undertaken.

Acknowledgments

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) needs to be acknowledged. Without their financial contribution, this research project could not have been undertaken.

Most importantly, the many community government employees who took the time to fill out the surveys (and provide information) need to be commended. This includes employees from communities across the NWT and some from Northern Alberta. Without their contribution, this report would not have yielded the rich information presented.

The NWT Wage and Benefit Survey Committee also contributed to the project. The Committee included Local Government Administrators of the NWT Board of Directors, other local community government administrative staff and elected officials, and personnel from the NWT Association of Communities, and Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Brian Desjardins (Executive Director of LGANT) deserves a special mention for his follow-up in ensuring that, as many surveys as possible were included in the research. His work helped achieve the high response rate reflected in the report.

Finally, the contractors who undertook the project should also be acknowledged: Manik Duggar, Rob Marshall and Bernie Hogan. Their work has helped shed light on an important issue facing northern community governments today.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

In most NWT communities, the community (or First Nation) government is responsible for providing a variety of programs and services to local residents, including the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, local and economic planning and development, delivery of water and sewer services and delivery of recreational and cultural programming.

In recent years, many community governments in the NWT have experienced difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified personnel to work in key positions within the community government. As a result, community governments often experience significant delays in re-staffing positions or are forced to employ available candidates in positions for which they may not be fully qualified in order to "get the job done". Long term difficulties in attracting or retaining qualified staff directly affects the ability of a community government to provide necessary programs and services to its citizens in a suitable, timely and cost-effective manner.

Anecdotal evidence provided by local government politicians and administrators suggests that the booming economy, a shortage of qualified workers and a general inability of community governments to provide competitive remuneration (i.e. wage and benefits) packages are all factors contributing to the staffing problems being faced by community governments.

At the 2005 Annual General Meeting of the Local Government Administrators of the NWT (LGANT), it was agreed by all members in attendance that there was a need for LGANT to undertake a wage and benefit survey, followed by a human resources workshop, to document and better understand the nature of this problem and identify potential solutions that would assist community governments in this area.

The project was organized and conducted in two steps:

1. Completion of a survey of the wage levels, benefits packages and employment policies currently in place in NWT communities; and,
2. Evaluation of the survey results and preparation of a written report, including recommendations on specific actions to assist community governments.

Funding for the project was provided to LGANT by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA).

1.2. Report Organization

The report is organized as follows:

Section 2 Background – explains the determinants of employee job satisfaction, provides an overview of the current conditions in the NWT labour market and indicates the typical annual spending by community governments on staff compensation (i.e. salaries and benefits).

Section 3 Methodology – explains the project methodology (including the development of the survey instrument) and the project limitations.

Section 4 Survey Results – presents the findings from the survey research.

Section 5 Analysis – presents an analysis of the surveys results.

Section 6 Recommendations – contains several recommendations regarding actions that could be undertaken to provide more assistance to the community governments in attracting and retaining qualified employees.

2. Background

Sections 2.1 to 2.3 provide background information on employee job satisfaction, the NWT labour market and the annual spending on employees by NWT community governments.

2.1. Employee Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as the extent to which employees like their work. It is an attitude based on employee perceptions (positive or negative) of their jobs and work environments. Not surprisingly, satisfied employees tend to be committed to an organization, are more productive, have lower absentee and turnover rates and often exceed the formal requirements of a job. By contrast, dissatisfied employees tend to show decreased commitment and productivity and often exhibit poor morale, higher rates of absenteeism and increased workplace aggression.

Most efforts to explain job satisfaction focus on the person-environment fit paradigm. In other words, the more a person's job and work environment fits his or her needs, values and personal characteristics, the higher the job satisfaction.

The extent to which an employee is satisfied with a job usually depends on several factors including the compensation package, the working conditions and other indirect influences.

2.1.1. Compensation Packages

Compensation refers to all forms of pay and rewards received by an employee for the performance of his or her job. The objectives of compensation are to attract and retain qualified employees, motivate performance and sustain morale.

Salaries or wages are the most common element of an employee's compensation package. While it is important that employers offer a competitive

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wage or salary for a particular job (i.e. the absolute level of pay), it should be noted that employees are usually concerned with how well they compare to other employees in the organization (i.e. relative levels of pay).

Benefits such as medical and dental coverage, short-term, long-term and accidental death insurance and pension plans comprise another part of an employee's compensation package. The importance of such benefits to the employee should not be overlooked as these benefits typically make up 15%-20% of the overall value of the compensation package.

2.1.2. Working Conditions and Other Factors

In addition to the compensation package, most employees are very aware of the employment policies and practices under which they work and other indirect factors that may influence their overall sense of job satisfaction.

Common employment policies that can affect employee job satisfaction (positively or negatively) include training and development, code of conduct, workplace harassment, grievance and flexible hours. Employment practices, such as effective communications regarding job duties and expectations and completion of regular performance appraisals also contribute to employees' overall job satisfaction.

Other factors that can influence worker job satisfaction include quality of work life, opportunities for advancement, relationships with co-workers and supervisors, adequate equipment and resources and a safe working environment.

2.1.3. Literature Review

While municipal employees have not been widely studied by academics, a 2001 study[1] of over 1,200 full-time municipal government employees in the United States evaluated the influence of fourteen different factors in determining job

[1] See Ellickson and Logsdon, *Determinants of Job Satisfaction of Municipal Government Employees* (2001)

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satisfaction among local government employees. The study found that the top three influences on employees' perceptions of job satisfaction were:

- opportunities for promotional advancement;
- satisfaction with pay; and,
- satisfaction with benefits.

Other important determinants of employee job satisfaction included relationships with immediate supervisors, operational factors (i.e. adequate equipment, adequate training and a safe work space) and somewhat surprisingly, departmental pride.

2.2. *NWT Labour Market*

A review of economic, demographic and labour market statistics prepared by the NWT Bureau of Statistics[2] indicates that there are several significant trends affecting the NWT labour market. Key observations include:

- Very slow population growth in recent years - about 1% per year from 2003 to 2005.
- Rapid economic growth in recent years – an increase of 71% from 1999 to 2005. Most of the increase occurred in the mining, oil and gas and construction industries.
- An increase in average income levels of 3.5% in 2004, which is significantly more than the inflation rate, which was 1.4% in 2004.
- 2005 employment rates of 82% in Yellowknife and 63% in the other communities. Both rates are above the historical averages.
- 2005 employment rates of approximately 93% for persons with a university degree, 88% for persons with a certificate or diploma and about 79% for persons with a high school diploma. By contrast, only 37% of persons with less than a Grade 9 education level were employed in 2005.

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[2] See NWT Bureau of Statistics, *NWT Socio-Economic Scan* (2006) and *Statistics Quarterly* (March 2006).

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2.2.1. Competition for Skilled Occupations

Taken together, the statistics presented above suggest that the community governments are facing a very competitive labour market in trying to fill positions. The total number of workers has not increased much in recent years even though the economy has increased some 70% since 1999.

Considering that the current employment rates for persons with a certificate, a diploma or a university degree average about 90%, it is clear that there are very few skilled workers available in the NWT and that the employers with the most competitive compensation packages and attractive work environments will be the most successful in competing for qualified workers.

Looking ahead, the creation of additional Aboriginal governments, ongoing mining exploration including the development of two more diamond mines, continued oil and gas exploration, and the possibility of the Mackenzie Gas Project are all factors that could further intensify the demand for skilled, educated workers.

To be competitive in filling key positions, particularly those requiring technical skills or a university degree, municipal governments must be able to offer similar compensation packages and working conditions as other levels of government and the private sector.

2.3. Community Operating Budgets

For many of the community governments, particularly in the twenty seven (27) smaller communities that are not municipal taxation authorities, the ability to offer competitive compensation packages is tied directly to the amount of operational funding they receive.

Table 2.3.1 below shows the average annual salary expenditures (2001 to 2006) by the community governments compared to the average total annual operational spending over the same time period[3]:

Table 2.3.1: Average Annual Salary Expenditures (2001 to 2006)*

Community Government	Average Total Annual Salary Expenditures	Average Total Annual Operational Expenditures	% Spent on Salaries
Aklavik	$885,442	$2,605,005	34.0%
Behchoko	$690,305	$3,308,192	20.9%
Colville Lake	$319,341	$1,504,799	21.2%
Deline	$647,799	$1,929,594	33.6%
Dettah	$2,527,778	$7,031,704	35.9%
Enterprise	$163,022	$611,525	26.7%
Fort Good Hope	$920,692	$2,148,396	42.9%
Fort Liard	$793,257	$2,008,888	39.5%
Fort McPherson	$896,712	$2,898,888	30.9%
Fort Providence	$726,485	$1,993,161	36.4%
Fort Resolution	$438,771	$1,289,085	34.0%
Fort Simpson	$1,126,605	$3,820,915	29.5%
Fort Smith	$1,706,958	$4,800,953	35.9%
Gameti	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hay River	$1,995,566	$8,823,422	22.6%
Inuvik	$2,341,623	$13,731,643	17.1%
Jean Marie River	$623,218	$1,441,527	43.2%
Kakisa	$353,630	$985,635	35.9%
Katlodeeche	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lutsel K'e	$1,520,384	$6,050,009	25.1%
Nahanni Butte	$540,128	$1,304,634	41.4%
Norman Wells	$1,250,020	$4,810,947	26.0%
Paulatuk	$741,620	$1,939,827	38.2%
Sachs Harbour	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trout Lake	$460,996	$1,231,438	37.4%
Tsiigehtchic	$731,237	$2,604,631	28.1%
Tuktoyaktuk	$1,217,932	$4,718,719	25.8%
Tulita	$481,293	$1,898,593	25.3%
Ulukhaktok	$1,547,007	$4,924,092	31.4%
Wekweeti	$623,115	$1,778,959	35.0%
Whati	$675,026	$1,960,766	34.4%
Wrigley	$805,903	$1,749,333	46.1%
Yellowknife	$12,373,400	$36,813,800	33.6%
Total	**$40,125,265**	**$132,719,080**	**30.2%**

* Note: the averages shown for some communities are based on less than 6 years of data due to gaps in reporting. Communities for which less than 3 years of data are available have been shown as "not available".

[3] Data provided by Community Financial Services, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

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It should be noted that many factors, such as climate, infrastructure, transportation links, economies of scale, local conditions etc. can influence the amount of funding that a community government needs to operate. As a result, some care should be taken in interpreting the data shown in Table 2.3.1.

That said, the figures do indicate that expenditures on employee wages and salaries represent a large expense item in community government operational budgets. Some relevant observations include:

- the total annual municipal government spending on salaries is greater than $40 million; and
- the range of municipal government spending on salaries is between 17.1% and 46.1%.

Given that many community governments spend at least 30% of their annual operational budgets on employee salaries and benefits, very few community governments appear to have the financial capacity to significantly increase the salaries or benefits offered to their employees.

For example, in order to increase municipal government employee compensation packages by 20%, the community governments would need to generate an additional $8 million ($40 million x 20%) in revenues or reduce expenditures on programs and services by a similar amount.

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey Methodology

In addition to financial constraints, other possible explanations for why community governments are experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified employees include:

- Shortage of skilled and competent workers;
- Absence of, or inappropriate, employment policies and practices that negatively impact employees' overall job satisfaction;
- Local conditions, such as isolation, lack of advancement opportunities, lack of adequate housing etc. that discourage current or potential employees and/or their families from settling in the community.

To better understand the challenges being experienced by community governments and identify potential solutions, LGANT decided during its 2005 Annual General Meeting to undertake a survey of local government wages, benefits and other human resource issues in each community.

3.1.1. Target Positions

At the start of the project, it was LGANT's intention to focus on key municipal government positions, such as the Senior Administrator or Band Managers, as well as financial, technical and administrative positions.

Given the wide range in the types of positions that exist within community governments, LGANT decided to collect relevant information on as many local government positions as possible. The idea was to allow the survey respondents to identify which jobs, in their opinion, were either key positions in the community government or were positions for which the community government was experiencing considerable difficulty in attracting or retaining qualified staff.

In this regard, background research and input from several local government administrators resulted in the following suggested list of key positions, which formed the basis for the survey:

- Senior Administrative Officer or Band Manager
- Director of Finance
- Finance Officer
- Economic Development Officer
- Recreation Coordinator
- Receptionist / Administrative Assistant / Clerk
- Foreman (or equivalent)
- Facilities Maintainer
- Heavy Equipment Operator
- Water Plant Operator
- Water Truck Driver
- Other (as described by the respondent)

3.1.2. Survey Development and Administration

In developing the survey questions, LGANT focussed on three areas: salaries and benefits; employment policies; and general questions on attracting and retaining staff.

In total, ten questions were developed. Several of the questions involved requests for copies of supporting documents such as job descriptions, employment policies and details on salaries, wages and benefits provided. A copy of the survey is shown in Appendix A.

3.2. Limitations

There are several limitations to this report:

- first, not all communities responded to the survey;
- second, not all community governments answered every question; and

- third, not all communities provided all of the information that was requested.

The main result of these three limitations is that this report is not as comprehensive/complete as it otherwise would have been had all of the information been provided.

Additionally, there is a fourth limitation – that this is a general study of recruitment and retention of staff within community governments in the NWT. The survey did not go into the detail necessary to distinguish between the occupations, which are experiencing difficulties in recruitment, and retention compared to those that are not. The main result of this limitation is the need to further examine some issues, which were beyond the scope of this review.

4. Survey Results

For the purposes of this study, LGANT considers that there are thirty-three (33) communities in the NWT[4].

4.1. Overall Results

A total of 26 completed surveys were received from the 33 communities – representing a response rate of 79%.

In addition to completing and returning the survey, the community governments were also requested to provide the following information for each key position selected in the survey:

- Job description;
- CV or resume for the current (or most recent) employee;
- Salary and wage figures; and,
- A description of leave and benefits entitlements.

Responses were received from the following communities:

Aklavik	Fort Simpson	Katlodeeche	Tulita
Deline	Fort Smith	Norman Wells	Ulukhaktok
Enterprise	Gameti	Paulatuk	Wekweeti
Fort Liard	Hay River	Sachs Harbour	Whati
Fort McPherson	Inuvik	Trout Lake	Yellowknife
Fort Providence	Jean Marie River	Tsiigehtchic	
Fort Resolution	Kakisa	Tuktoyaktuk	

The results are presented in the same format as that of the survey, and follow the same three sections outlined above. Please note that in this section, "N" stands for "number of communities responding"; and due to rounding, sometimes

[4] Including Dettah, Kakisa and Katlodeeche but excluding N'Dilo.

percentages do not add up to 100. Also note that as not every community responded to every question, the N does not always equal 26.

4.2. Salaries and Benefits

Table 4.2.1 shows the key positions employed in each of the responding communities.

Table 4.2.1: Key Positions in Each Community

	N	%
Town Foreman (or equivalent)	23	88
Rec Coordinator	23	88
SAO	22	85
Finance Officer	22	85
Receptionist/ Admin Assitant	22	85
Water Plant Operator	20	77
Facilities Maintainer	18	69
Heavy Equipment Operator	17	65
Water/Sewer Truck Driver	15	58
Finance Director	11	42
Band Manager	8	31
Other	7	27
Economic Development Officer	6	23

The most frequent positions employed in the responding communities included: Town Foreman (or equivalent); Rec Coordinator; SAO; Finance Officer; Receptionist/Admin Assistant; Water Plant Operator; Facilities Maintainer; Heavy Equipment Operator, Water/Sewage Truck Driver; and Finance Director. Positions such as Band Manager, Economic Development Officer and "Other" positions (including as bylaw officers, pool employees, librarians, fire-fighters and Youth Justice Coordinators) were cited less frequently.

The salary ranges for the 10 most frequently listed community positions are as follows:

- Town Foreman ($20.00 - $41.73/hour);

- Rec Coordinator ($14.50 - $34.78/hour);
- SAO ($30.01 - $52.57/hour);
- Finance Officer ($16.50 - $41.06/hour);
- Receptionist/Admin Assistant ($14.00 - $36.63);
- Water Plant Operator ($19.00 - $33.09/hour);
- Facilities Maintainer ($15.00 - $34.78/hour);
- Heavy Equipment Operator ($17.50 - $32.13/hour);
- Water/Sewage Truck Driver ($16.00 - $30.00/hour); and
- Finance Director ($22.47 - $51.38/hour)[5].

The salaries for these key positions are compared (by community) later in section 5.

Table 4.2.2 provides details of the benefits provided to employees.

Table 4.2.2: Employee Benefits

	N	%
Vacation Leave	20	77
Sick Leave	18	69
Life Insurance	18	69
Northern Living Allowance	17	65
Dental/Medical	16	62
VTA	16	62
Staff Housing	16	62
Short/Long Term Disability	15	58
Bonus Payments	5	19

It should be noted that some benefits – particularly staff housing and bonus payments – are often only available for senior management positions (such as the SAO). The majority of communities provide benefits to employees through the Northern Employee Benefits Services (NEBS).

[5] It should be noted that these figures reflect hourly rates based on a 37.5 hour work week, and also include northern living allowance payments.

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The following provides a brief overview of the range of most of these benefits:

Vacation Leave

The range across the communities that provided information on vacation entitlements is between 15 and 35 days per year.

Sick Leave

The standard offered in communities across the NWT is 15 days per year.

Insurance Coverages

18 community governments provide insurance coverages to their municipal employees. Of these, 10 are enrolled in the Northern Employers Benefits Service. The NEBS plan typically includes life, accidental death and dismemberment, dependant, and short and long-term disability insurance coverages.

Northern Living Allowance

17 community governments provide a Northern Living Allowance to their municipal employees. The annual payments range from a low of $1500 in Fort Providence to a high of just under $14,000 in Paulatuk.

Dental/Medical

16 communities provide dental plan coverage for their municipal employees. Of these, 9 participate in the Northern Employers Benefits Service.

Vacation Travel Allowance

16 community governments provide vacation travel allowances to their municipal employees. The allowances are usually provided as cash payments (ranging from $1,100 to $10,000 per year) but a few communities provide the benefit in the form of additional vacation days.

Staff Housing

16 communities provide staff housing or a housing allowance. For most, this benefit is provided only to the SAO or Band Manager. Two communities provide a housing allowance (ranging from $3,600 to $5,400 per year).

Bonus Payments

5 communities provided bonus payments to staff (usually in the form of Christmas bonuses). As noted above, these bonuses are often only for select senior staff (such as the SAO).

A comparison of these benefits (by community) is provided later in section 5.

Unfortunately, the response rate for providing job descriptions or employee CVs and resumes was very low. As a result, no analysis or recommendations are provided in this report regarding the extent to which community governments have good job descriptions for their key positions or the extent to which the community governments' current employees are fully qualified for their stated duties.

A majority of communities (69%; N = 18) indicated that they provided a pension plan for their employees. The main types of pension plans that are provided include:

- RRSP matching (31%; N = 5);
- defined contributions pension plans (25%; N = 4); and
- defined benefits plans (19%; N = 3).

For those communities that don't provide pension plans to employees, the main reason for not doing so was the lack of financial resources for those plans.

4.3. Employment Policies

The majority of communities (81%; N = 21) indicated that their employees were not unionized. Table 4.3.1 outlines the employee practices or policies that are applicable in the responding communities.

Table 4.3.1: Employee Practices/Policies

	N	%
Employee Training	21	81
Performance Appraisal Policy	20	77
Code of Conduct	17	65
Workplace Harassment Policy	17	65
Grievance Policy	17	65
Educational Leave	16	62
Employee Compensation Increment Grid	14	54
Position Evaluation/Classification Policy	13	50
Flexible Hours	5	19
Discipline Policy	2	8

The following provides a brief overview of the range of most of these practices/policies as implemented in community governments across the NWT:

Employee Training / Educational Leave

Employee training and/or educational leave policies recognize that employees should receive training to increase skills, knowledge and abilities directly related to the performance of their duties, to obtain and maintain required licenses and certifications and to develop staff resources. Different types of support include leave with or without pay, provision of training at no cost to the employee or reimbursing the employee for costs incurred.

Performance Appraisal Policy

For the purposes of employee promotion, retention and training, performance appraisals are usually performed on a yearly basis. Often, the employee is given an opportunity to review and discuss the evaluation.

Code of Conduct

An employee code of conduct (or code of ethics) assists employees in maintaining standards of behaviour related to their employment. Typical provisions include terms related to outside employment, conflict of interest, dealing with relations, misuse of information, contact with media, criminal offenses, interaction with the public, acceptance of gifts and political activity.

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Workplace Harassment Policy

The standard across the communities is generally freedom from sexual harassment, harassment based on personal characteristics (such as race, colour, gender, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability etc) or other harassment related to inappropriate verbal or physical conduct.

Grievance Policy

A Grievance Policy indicates how disputes arising from the interpretation or application of the employer's policies (as specified in a Personnel Directive, Collective Agreement or Employment Bylaw) should be resolved. Typically, a series of steps for resolving the dispute are outlined, starting first with the employee's immediate supervisor, then involving a Manager and concluding, if necessary, with the matter being reviewed by a Grievance Committee or referred to arbitration.

Position Classification Policy

Job positions are often classified based on characteristics such as job qualifications, level of responsibility, degree of difficulty, working conditions, skill required and amount of supervision required. Each classification is designated a particular salary or salary range.

Employee Compensation Increment Grid

Classified job positions are often designated a particular salary range that is broken down into increments or "steps". Often, an employee compensation increment grid (i.e. a Table) is used to show the salary range and steps for all positions within an organization.

Discipline Policy

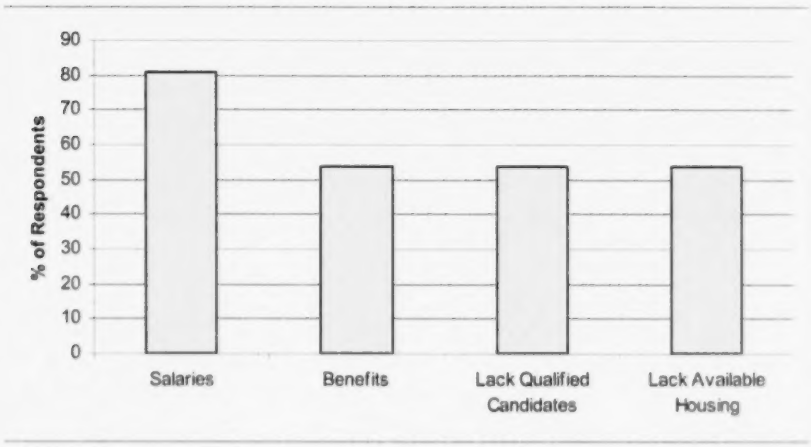
Generally, this includes the procedures that are to be taken when employees are habitually late (or miss work altogether). They also cover issues such as substance abuse while on the job.

A comparison of these policies (by community) is provided later in section 5.

4.4. *Attracting and Retaining Staff*

Community governments were asked to list the most common reasons why they may be experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff. Figure 4.4.1 presents these results.

Figure 4.4.1: Reasons for Difficulties in Attracting/Retaining Staff



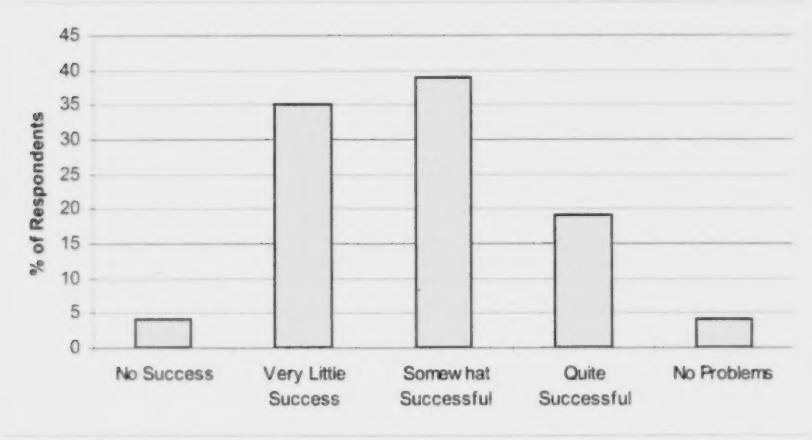
The most important reason was the inability to pay competitive salaries and wages (81%; N = 21). The other important reasons – including the inability to provide competitive benefits, the lack of qualified candidates, and the lack of available housing – were all identified less often by responding communities (54%; N = 14).

Additionally, some community governments noted that the remote locations of their communities (12%; N = 3) and competition from government/industry (8%; N = 2) were also important reasons why they may be experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff. One community (4%) indicated that staff retention was not really an issue – as most staff were locally trained and hired.

The average time spent by most employees in their positions was approximately 3 years.

Figure 4.4.2 shows community governments views of their success in attracting and retaining qualified staff.

Figure 4.4.2: Success in Attracting/Retaining Staff



Most communities indicated that they were having either very little success (35%; N = 9) or some success (39%; N = 10) in attracting and retaining staff. Fewer communities indicated that they were quite successful (19%; N = 5). The fewest number of communities indicated that they were either having no success (4%; N = 1) at all or no problems at all (4%; N = 1) in attracting and retaining staff.

Community governments indicated that the factors, which would most assist them in attracting and retaining staff, included:

- Competitive salaries/wages (85%; N = 22);
- Benefits package (54%; N = 14);
- Staff housing (54%; N = 14);
- Training/professional development opportunities (46%; N = 12);
- Pension plan (42%; N = 11); and
- Opportunities for advancement (35%; N = 9).

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5. Analysis

This section of the report analyses the raw data presented in section 4.0. The main approach taken in this section is to compare the results from community governments (in terms of salaries, benefits, employment policies, and the issues raised in attracting and retaining staff) both to each other and to other employers in the NWT (such as the GNWT, BHP Billiton, and the NWT Power Corporation).

5.1. Salaries

Table 5.1.1 below shows salary and wage information, as reported by the communities, for the ten most common positions. It should be noted that these figures have been adjusted to hourly rates based on a 37.5 hour work-week and also include any applicable northern living allowance payments provided for the community governments

Table 5.1.2 below provides a comparison of the average salary or wage paid by community governments for the ten most common positions to the salaries or wages paid for these positions (or close equivalents) by other types of employers. The other three northern employers chosen for the purposes of the comparison included the GNWT, the NWT Power Corporation and the Ekati diamond mine.

Table 5.1.3 below provides similar information from municipal governments from communities in Northern Alberta. Although 8 communities were contacted to participate in the survey, only 5 communities (Camrose, Grand Prairie, High Level, Manning and Slave Lake) responded. Information from these communities provides a reasonable comparison to other smaller, remote communities.

It should be noted that for some of the community government positions, such as the SAO or a Water Truck Driver, there is no corresponding position to compare with. Where possible, jobs requiring similar skills and experience were used to provide a reasonable basis for comparison.

Table 5.1.1: Comparison of Salaries for Ten Most Common Positions ($/ hour)*

	Senior Admin Officer	Director/ Manager, Finance / Admin	Finance Officer	Program / Recreation Coordinator	Office Clerk / Assistant / Receptionist	Manager / Foreman, Operations	Facilities Maintainer	Equipment Operator	Water / Sewer Plant Operator	Water Truck Driver
Aklavik	$41.44		$33.07	$33.58	$22.08	$25.90	$26.55			
Deline	$38.43			$22.74	$19.75	$32.73	$24.24			
Enterprise	$41.02		$16.50	$18.00	$18.00		$15.00			
Fort Liard	$41.00	$30.35	$25.80	$22.05	$20.49	$29.30	$19.18		$23.03	$22.85
Fort McPherson	$50.27	$34.33	$23.34	$26.79	$24.49	$32.85	$23.34	$26.17	$28.31	
Fort Providence	$30.45	$22.47		$21.69	$15.30	$21.08	$19.00		$19.00	$19.97
Fort Resolution	$33.00		$25.52	$25.00	$17.00	$26.00	$18.00	$20.00	$21.00	$18.54
Fort Simpson	$36.41	$30.03		$26.07	$23.90	$26.95	$18.42	$21.23	$25.28	
Fort Smith	$45.00	$35.40	$27.16	$33.09	$23.18	$35.40	$23.18	$25.47	$24.68	
Gameti	$43.33	$28.80	$20.00	$14.50	$14.00	$22.50	$21.00	$17.50		$16.00
Hay River	$38.02	$34.58	$24.88		$21.86	$34.58	$21.86	$24.88	$27.10	
Inuvik	$50.17	$41.97	$36.58	$34.78	$31.20	$39.34	$34.78	$32.13	$33.09	
Jean Marie River	$31.28		$18.50	$19.50	$15.00	$28.00		$20.00		$18.00
Norman Wells	$51.32	$32.75	$28.02	$30.94	$26.54	$27.21	$25.06		$27.21	
Paulatuk	$52.27			$29.68	$36.63	$41.73	$30.84			
Sachs Harbour	$37.64		$30.98	$27.27	$25.12	$33.37	$21.80			$24.86
Tsiigehtchic	$41.02	$34.36	$22.05	$26.67	$22.56	$29.74	$22.56	$23.08	$23.08	
Trout Lake	$34.44		$26.57	$15.00	$15.00	$20.00				$30.00
Tuktoyaktuk	$44.78	$40.45	$25.54	$29.68	$22.76	$34.44	$26.02	$24.94		
Tulita	$30.01	$30.66	$17.50	$21.83	$22.50	$28.10	$20.31	$20.72		
Wekweeti	$45.00		$20.35		$15.50	$22.61				$20.86
Ulukhaktok	$46.24	$51.38	$41.06	$22.32	$16.55	$36.17	$28.22	$25.05	$30.84	$16.96
Whati	$40.12		$18.34	$25.10	$14.34	$28.13	$27.38		$20.38	$21.88
Yellowknife				$28.63	$24.13		$25.56	$21.91	$25.56	
Average	**$40.99**	**$34.43**	**$25.36**	**$25.22**	**$21.16**	**$29.82**	**$23.44**	**$23.31**	**$25.27**	**$20.99**

- Note 1: Where salary grids were provided, figures shown are from the initial salary step (i.e. Step 1) unless specific pay steps were indicated for each position.
- Note 2: Annual salary figures were converted to an hourly equivalent based on 37.5 hours per week.
- Note 3: Figures include northern living allowance payments.

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Table 5.1.2: Comparison of NWT Municipal Government Salaries to Other NWT Employers ($/hour)

Position	Range for Municipal Governments	Range for GNWT[1]	Range for NWT Power Corporation[2]	Range for Ekati Diamond Mine[3]
Senior Admin Officer[4]	$30.01 - $52.27	$41.05 - $55.77		
Director/Manager, Finance	$22.47 - $51.38	$41.05 - $55.77	$49.34 - $59.98	
Finance Officer	$16.50 - $41.06	$34.20 - $42.50		
Program/Rec. Coordinator	$14.50 - $34.78	$34.20 - $38.79		
Office Clerk/Assistant	$14.00 - $36.63	$22.55 - $25.56	$25.01 - $30.40	
Operations Foreman[5]	$20.00 - $41.73	$32.64 - $37.02		$29.81 - $37.98
Facilities Maintainer	$15.00 - $34.78	$31.20 - $35.40		$21.58 - $26.35
Heavy Equip. Operator	$17.50 - $32.13	$29.01 - $32.91		$26.35 - $32.07
Water Plant Operator[6]	$19.00 - $33.09	$26.09 - $29.58	$27.51 - $33.34	$29.81 - $36.54
Water Truck Driver[7]	$16.00 - $30.00	$26.09 - $29.58		$21.58 - $26.35

- Note 1: see Collective Agreement between GNWT and Union of Northern Workers.
- Note 2: see Collective Agreement between NWT Power Corporation and Union of Northern Workers.
- Note 3: see Collective Agreement between BHP Billiton and PSA, Diamond Workers Local X3050.
- Note 4: SAO position compared to managers in public administration (GNWT).
- Note 5: Operations Foreman position compared to municipal works officer (GNWT) and process control trade (Ekati).
- Note 6: Water Plant Operator position compared to water plant operator (GNWT and NTPC) and boiler operator (Ekati).
- Note 7: Water Truck Driver position compared to school bus driver (GNWT), similar driving positions.

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Table 5.1.3: Comparison of NWT Municipal Government Salaries to Northern Alberta Municipalities ($/hour)

Position	Range for Municipal Governments	Range for City of Camrose[1]	Range for City of Grande Prairie[2]	Range for Town of High Level[3]	Range for Town of Manning[4]	Range for Town of Slave Lake[5]
Senior Admin Officer	$30.01 - $52.27	$45.00 - $67.69	$60.00 - $80.05	N/A	$30.00 - $40.00	N/A
Director/Manager, Finance	$22.47 - $51.38	$41.62 - $48.45	$50.00 - $70.00	$34.25 - $41.90	N/A	$34.07 - $40.88
Finance Officer	$16.50 - $41.06	N/A	$21.03 - $25.50	$19.75 - $22.70	$22.00 - $26.00	N/A
Program/Rec. Coordinator	$14.50 - $34.78	N/A	N/A	$20.19 - $24.61	N/A	$22.11 - $27.64
Office Clerk/Assistant	$14.00 - $36.63	$19.03 - $22.16	$18.34 - $22.20	$22.55 - $25.99	$15.00 - $19.00	$17.10 - $21.37
Operations Foreman	$20.00 - $41.73	N/A	$35.49 - $43.00	$24.72 - $30.18	$25.00 - $30.00	$27.52 - $34.40
Facilities Maintainer	$15.00 - $34.78	N/A	$24.09 – $30.51	$22.88 - $27.91	$23.00 - $26.00	$15.23 - $19.19
Heavy Equip. Operator	$17.50 - $32.13	$18.54 - $23.07	$20.58 - $42.22	$17.00 - $29.33	$20.00 - $24.00	$20.83-$26.04
Water Plant Operator	$19.00 - $33.09	$29.66 - $34.53	$20.98 – $42.22	$19.03 - $23.20	$25.00 - $29.00	$23.67 - $29.59
Water Truck Driver	$16.00 - $30.00	N/A	$22.64 - $32.41	N/A	N/A	N/A

- Note 1: the ranges provided are based on a 37.5 hour work-week. N/A means that the information was not available. Some ranges are estimates only (so that individual salaries are not identified).
- Note 2: the ranges provided are based on a 37.5 hour work-week. N/A means that the information was not available. Some ranges are estimates only (so that individual salaries are not identified).
- Note 3: the ranges provided are based on a 37.5 hour work-week. N/A means that the information was not available.
- Note 4: the ranges provided are based on a 37.5 hour work-week. N/A means that the information was not available. Some ranges are estimates only (so that individual salaries are not identified).
- Note 5: the ranges provided are based on a 37.5 hour work-week. N/A means that the information was not available.

LGANT

The following observations can be drawn from the information presented in Tables 5.1.1 - 5.1.3:

1. There is a wide fluctuation in the salary ranges paid by municipal governments for all 10 of the most frequently cited positions.

2. For the most part, the salary ranges for other employers (such as the GNWT, NTPC and BHP) are in the top end of the ranges provided by municipal governments. This is true for all of the most frequently cited positions except Receptionist/Admin Assistant, and Town Foreman (where the GNWT ranges are in the mid to top portion of the salary ranges). This highlights a salary "gap" for the many community governments who cannot afford to pay those salaries at the top end of the range.

3. For the most part, the salary ranges for municipal employers in Northern Alberta are higher than those in community governments in the NWT – especially for senior level positions. For non-senior level positions, the salary ranges for those employers are in the top end of the ranges provided by community governments in the NWT. This salary "gap" makes is difficult for many community governments in the NWT to complete against municipal employers from the Northern Alberta region.

4. The inability of community governments to pay competitive salaries and wages is undermining their efforts to attract and retain qualified staff. As the results presented in section 4 show, a majority of communities (81%) indicated that their inability to pay competitive salaries and wages was the most important reason why they were experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining staff. Similarly, the leading factor that would most assist community governments improve their ability to attract and retain staff was if they could provide those competitive salaries and wages (85%).

5.2. *Benefits*

Table 5.2.1 below compares the range of benefits packages as provided by community governments.

Table 5.2.2 compares the range of benefits packages as provided by community governments to other employers (such as the GNWT, BHP Billiton, and the NWT Power Corporation).

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Table 5.2.1: Comparison of Pension and Benefits Packages between Communities

	Sick Leave	Vacation Leave	Pension / RRSP Plan	Northern Living Allowance	Vacation Travel Allowance	Staff Housing / Allowance	Disability Insurance	Life Insurance	Dental Plan
Aklavik	U	15-30 days	No	$10,211	No	No	No	No	NEBS
Deline	15 days	15-30 days	Yes	No	$6,000	$5,400	No	Yes	No
Enterprise	15 days	U	No	No	No	SAO only	No	No	No
Fort Liard	15 days	15-30 days	Yes	$5,400	No	No	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Fort McPherson	15 days	15-30 days	RRSP	$10,236	Yes	3 units	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Fort Providence	15 days	15-30 days	RRSP	$1,492	Yes	No	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Fort Resolution	U	U	No	No	No	2 units	No	No	No
Fort Simpson	15 days	15-30 days	RRSP	$6,000	$2,700	SAO only	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Fort Smith	15 days	18-35 days	NEBS	$3,277	No	No	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Gameti	U	U	No	U	U	U	U	U	U
Hay River	15 days	15-30 days	Pension	$5,400	No	Mgmt only	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Inuvik	15 days	15-25 days	Pension	$8,552	2 days	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jean Marie River	U	14 days	NEBS	No	$5-$10K	BM only	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Kakisa	U	U	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Katlodeeche	U	U	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Norman Wells	15 days	15-25 days	RRSP	$12,000	Yes	No	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Paulatuk	15 days	15-25 days	No	$13,959	Yes	SAO only	No	No	No
Sachs Harbour	15 days	15-30 days	NEBS	$8,434	$6,000	2 units	NEBS	NEBS	Optional
Trout Lake	15 days	15-24 days	No	$5,400	No	No	No	No	No
Tsiigehtchic	15 days	15-30 days	RRSP	$10,000	$2,000	Yes	No	No	No
Tuktoyaktuk	15 days	18-30 days	Yes	$8,400	$5,000	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tulita	15 days	15-28 days	No	$5,733	$4,500	Allowance	No	No	No
Ulukhaktok	15 days	15-28 days	Yes	No	Yes	$7,920	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Wekweeti	U	U	Pension	No	No	SAO only	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Whati	15 days	15-25 days	Pension	$6,519	Yes	$5,400	NEBS	NEBS	NEBS
Yellowknife	15 days	15-35 days	RRSP	U	$1,100	$3,600	LT only	Yes	Yes
Summary Statistics	**15 days**	**15-35 days**	**Yes = 18**	**$1,492 to $13,959**	**Yes = 16**	**Yes = 16**	**Yes = 15**	**Yes = 18**	**Yes = 16**

- Note 1: U = unknown, information not provided
- Note 2: NEBS = Northern Employers Benefits Services
- Note 3: SAO = Senior Administrative Officer. BM = Band Manager.
- Note 4: LT = long term.

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Table 5.2.2: Comparison of NWT Municipal Government Benefits to Other Employers

Benefit	Range for Municipal Governments	GNWT[1]	NWT Power Corporation[2]	Ekati Diamond Mine[3]
Sick Leave	15 days	15 days	15 days	Unknown
Vacation Leave	15-35 days	16.5-35 days	15-35 days	14 days (@ 12 hrs/day)
RRSP/Pension Plan	Yes - 18 communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northern Living Allowance	$1,500 to $14,000	$2,511 to $20,717	$2,873 to $20,276	Yes
Vacation Travel Allowance	Yes – 16 communities	No	No	No
Staff Housing / Allowance	Yes – 16 communities	No	No	No
Disability Insurance	Yes – 15 communities	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Life Insurance	Yes – 18 communities	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Dental Plan	Yes – 16 communities	Yes	Yes	Unknown

- Note 1: see Collective Agreement between GNWT and Union of Northern Workers.
- Note 2: see Collective Agreement between NWT Power Corporation and Union of Northern Workers.
- Note 3: see Collective Agreement between BHP Billiton and PSA, Diamond Workers Local X3050.
- "Unknown" - these topics are not mentioned in the collective agreement

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The following observations can be drawn from the information presented in Tables 5.2.1 and 5.2.2:

1. There is a wide fluctuation in the benefits packages as provided by community governments, particularly with regard to the range for the Northern Living Allowance (if provided).

2. All employers – municipal governments, the GNWT, NTPC and BHP – provide roughly the same levels of sick leave and vacation leave. They also provide similar types of benefits – including disability and life insurance, and dental plans – although there is wide variation across employers.

3. The GNWT and NTPC provide much higher Northern Living Allowances than municipal governments.

4. Municipal governments provide better benefits with regard to staff housing and VTAs than do the GNWT or NTPC.

5. The provision of a competitive benefits package is important – it was listed as the second most important factor that would assist community governments in attracting and retaining qualified staff (54%). However, the provision of such a benefits package is not as important as the provision of competitive salaries and wages.

5.3. Employment Policies

Table 5.3.1 below compares the range of employment policies as used by community governments.

Table 5.3.2 compares the range of employment policies as used by community governments to those used by other employers (such as the GNWT, BHP Billiton, and the NWT Power Corporation).

Table 5.3.1: Comparison of Employment Policies between Communities

	Training	Educational Leave	Code of Conduct	Workplace Harassment Policy	Grievance Policy	Flexible Hours Policy	Position Evaluation & Classification Policies	Performance Appraisal Policy	Employee Compensation and Review Policy
Aklavik	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Deline	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Enterprise	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Fort Liard	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Ft. McPherson	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ft. Providence	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Fort Resolution	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Fort Simpson	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fort Smith	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Gameti	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Hay River	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inuvik	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Jean M. River	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Kakisa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Katlodeeche	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norman Wells	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Paulatuk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Sachs Harbour	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trout Lake	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Tsiigehtchic	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Tuktoyaktuk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tulita	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Ulukhaktok	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wekweeti	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Whati	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Yellowknife	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Summary Statistics	**Yes = 21**	**Yes = 16**	**Yes = 17**	**Yes = 17**	**Yes = 17**	**Yes = 5**	**Yes = 13**	**Yes =20**	**Yes = 14**

GNWT

Table 5.3.2: Comparison of NWT Municipal Government Employment Policies to Other Employers

Policy	Municipal Governments	GNWT[1]	NWT Power Corporation[2]	Ekati Diamond Mine[3]
Training	Yes – 21 communities	Yes	Unknown	Unknown
Educational Leave	Yes – 16 communities	Yes	Unknown	Unknown
Code of Conduct	Yes – 17 communities	Yes	Unknown	Unknown
Workplace Harassment	Yes – 17 communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grievances	Yes – 17 communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flexible Hours	Yes – 5 communities	Yes	Yes	No
Position Evaluation & Classification	Yes – 13 communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Performance Appraisal	Yes – 20 communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employee Compensation & Review	Yes – 14 communities	Yes	Yes	Yes

- Note 1: see Collective Agreement between GNWT and Union of Northern Workers.
- Note 2: see Collective Agreement between NWT Power Corporation and Union of Northern Workers.
- Note 3: see Collective Agreement between BHP Billiton and PSA, Diamond Workers Local X3050.
- "Unknown" - these topics are not mentioned in the collective agreements

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The following observations can be drawn from the information presented in Tables 5.3.1 and 5.3.2:

1. There is a wide fluctuation in the employment policies of community governments.

2. All employers – municipal governments, the GNWT, NWTPC and BHP – have similar employment policies in place. However, those employment policies apply to 100% of the workplaces for those other employers (compared to the roughly 60-80% of workplaces for municipal governments in the NWT).

3. The provision of employment policies is less of an issue in attracting and retaining staff for community governments when compared to the inability to pay competitive salaries and wages (and to a lesser extent, the inability to provide competitive benefits packages).

5.4. *Attracting and Retaining Staff*

The results of section 4 were analysed in two areas, looking for:

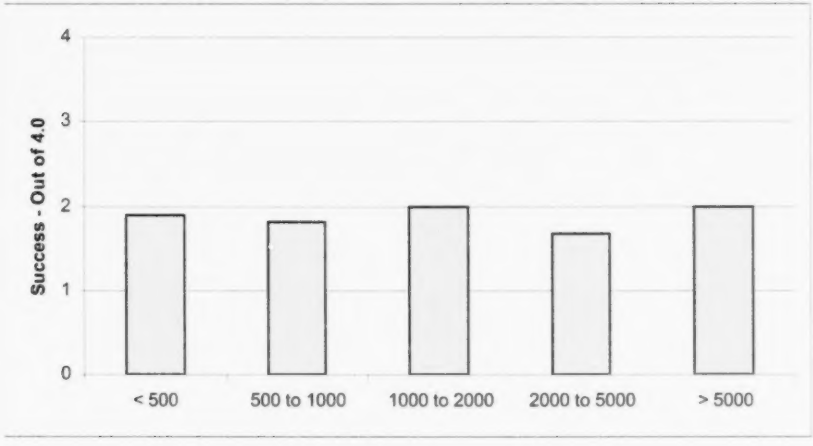
- differences (along key variables) in the level of success in attracting and retaining staff; and
- differences (along key variables) in the length of time in retaining staff.

Note that in this section, "M" stands for mean (or average) score, that the success scales are out of 4.0, and that the length of stay scales are out of 6.0.

5.4.1. Success in Attracting and Retaining Staff

Overall, there were no real differences between community governments of different sizes in their levels of success in attracting and retaining staff. In other words, they were all mostly in the "somewhat successful" range (M = 1.85). These results are presented in Figure 5.4.1.

Figure 5.4.1: Success in Attracting & Retaining Staff by Community Size



Communities with between 1000 and 2000 people, and those with over 5000 people had the highest levels of success (M = 2.0). Communities with less than 500 people had the next highest level of success (M = 1.90). Communities with between 500 and 1000 people (M = 1.82), and those with between 2000 and 5000 people (M = 1.67) had the lowest levels of success.

Similarly, there were no real differences in levels of success in attracting and retaining staff between community governments that:

- provided pension plans (M = 1.81) compared to those that did not (M = 1.78);
- had unionized employees (M = 2.00) compared to those that did not (M = 1.81);
- provided a northern living allowance (M = 1.88) compared to those that did not (M = 1.75); and
- provided vacation travel allowances (M = 2.07) compared to those that did not (M = 1.50).

The overall conclusion to these findings is that all community governments – regardless of size, benefits packages provided, or whether unionized or not – are currently having limited success in attracting and retaining staff key staff.

5.4.2. Length of Time Retaining Staff

There was one important difference amongst community governments regarding the length of time their employees stay in their positions. Communities that provide northern living allowances (NLAs) had employees stay in their positions in the "3 to 5 year range" (M = 4.07) while communities that did not provide NLAs had employees stay in their positions in the "1 to 3 year" range (M = 3.25). These results are presented in Figure 5.4.2.

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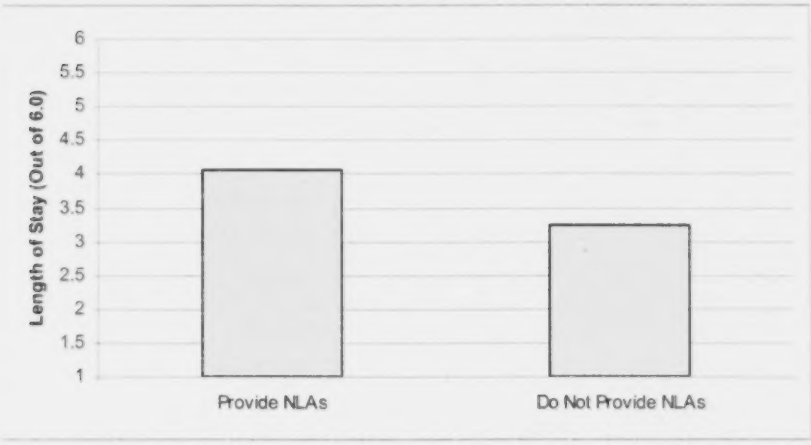
Figure 5.4.2: Length of Stay by NLAs



However, there were no real differences in the length of time in retaining staff between community governments that:

- provided pension plans (M = 3.88) compared to those that did not (M = 3.50);
- had unionized employees (M = 4.20) compared to those that did not (M = 3.75); and
- provided a VTA (M = 3.69) compared to those that did not (M = 3.90).

Similarly, there were no real differences between community governments of different sizes in the length of time in retaining staff. Communities with between 500 and 1000 people (M = 4.00), 1000 and 2000 people (M = 4.00), and those with between 2000 and 5000 people (M = 4.00) were able to keep employees in their positions the longest. Communities with less than 500 people (M = 3.67) were able to keep employees in their positions second longest. Communities with over 5000 people were able to keep employees in their positions the least amount of time (M = 3.0).

The overall conclusion to these findings is that all community governments – regardless of size, benefits packages provided, or whether unionized or not – are currently able to keep the majority of their employees in their positions for roughly

the same amount of time (approximately 3 years). The only exception is that providing a northern living allowance appears to lengthen employees time spent in their positions to approximately 5 years.

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6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall conclusion to the findings from this survey is that all community governments – regardless of size, benefits packages provided, or whether unionized or not – are currently having limited success in attracting and retaining key staff. Community governments indicated that the inability to pay competitive salaries and wages is the most important reason for this situation. A secondary (and lesser important) reason is the inability to provide comprehensive benefits packages.

Recommendation #1

Obtain additional funding to boost salaries and wages for key community government positions so that there is less of a gap between the salaries provided by community governments and those provided by other NWT employers. Also ensure that funding is targeted towards the provision of Northern Living Allowances for staff (which helps keep employees in their positions for longer periods of time).

One of the limitations outlined above is that this is a general study of recruitment and retention of staff within community governments in the NWT. Due to budgetary constraints, only one person (i.e. Senior Administrative Officer or Band Manager) within each community government was surveyed.

Additionally, the survey did not go into the detail necessary to distinguish between the occupations, which are experiencing difficulties in recruitment, and retention compared to those that are not. This is important – as several communities noted that they have great success with some employees in some occupations (i.e. they are able to retain them for over 10 years at a time). Finally, as also noted above, not all information requested was provided. This has made it difficult to provide analysis and recommendations regarding the qualifications of candidates currently filling community government positions.

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Recommendation #2

Undertake further study to determine which specific positions, based on a representative sample of community governments from the various regions, are experiencing the most difficulty regarding recruitment and retention within community governments. With this information, a "ballpark" estimate of the cost to implement Recommendation #1 could be more accurately determined. Also ensure that job descriptions and qualifications for key positions are submitted for analysis, so that recommendations regarding the qualifications of candidates can be undertaken.

These conclusions and recommendations highlight some of the main issues which need to be addressed in order to effectively deal with the difficulties many community governments are experiencing in attracting and retaining qualified staff.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

NWT Community Governments

Human Resources Survey

Name and Title: _____

Community: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Tel / Fax: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Introduction

Due to various pressures, community governments in the NWT are experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff. The Local Government Administrators of the NWT (LGANT) is interested in better understanding the factors involved and developing potential solutions to assist community governments in this area.

Funding for this project has been provided to LGANT by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA). LGANT is undertaking this work in three steps:

1. conduct a survey of the wage levels, benefits packages and employment policies currently in place in the NWT communities;
2. analyze the survey results and prepare a written report, including recommendations on specific actions to assist community governments; and,
3. organize a workshop for local government administrators to discuss the survey findings and recommended solutions

The survey questions are provided below. All responses will be kept confidential. The survey will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Your participation is very much appreciated.

Section 1 – Salaries and Benefits

1. Please indicate which of the following key positions are applicable in your community (check as many as required):
   - ❑ Senior Administrative Officer
   - ❑ Band Manager
   - ❑ Director of Finance
   - ❑ Finance Officer
   - ❑ Recreation Coordinator
   - ❑ Economic Development Officer
   - ❑ Receptionist/Administrative Assistant
   - ❑ Town Foreman (or equivalent)
   - ❑ Water Plant Operator
   - ❑ Water Truck Driver
   - ❑ Heavy Equipment Operator
   - ❑ Facilities Maintainer
   - ❑ Other. Please describe _____

2. For each position checked in question 1. above, please provide the following information (as applicable or available):

   1. Job description
   2. CV or resume for the current (or most recent) employee
   3. Annual salary (or hourly wage)
   4. Sick leave entitlement (days per year)
   5. Vacation leave entitlement (days per year)

3. Please indicate which of the following components are provided to your employees as part of their benefits package:

   - ❑ Bonus payments. Please describe _____
   - ❑ Northern living allowance. How much money per year? _____
   - ❑ Vacation travel allowance. How much money per year? _____
   - ❑ Staff housing. Please describe _____
   - ❑ Short and long-term disability insurance
   - ❑ Dental plan
   - ❑ Life insurance
   - ❑ Other. Please describe _____

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For each component checked above, please provide a copy of all relevant documents such as insurance policies, dental plan etc.

4. Please indicate whether a pension plan is provided for your employees?

   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

   If yes, please indicate the type of pension plan (and provide a copy):

   - ❑ Defined benefit pension plan
   - ❑ Defined contributions pension plan
   - ❑ Other. Please describe _____

   If a pension plan is not provided, please indicate the reason why:

   - ❑ Too expensive
   - ❑ Too complicated
   - ❑ Don't know
   - ❑ Other. Please explain _____

Section 2 – Employment Policies

1. Are your employees members of a union?
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

   If yes, please provide a copy of the collective agreement(s) or indicate where we can obtain a copy _____

2. Please indicate which of the following employee practices or policies are applicable in your community (check as many as required):
   - ❑ Employee training / professional development
   - ❑ Educational leave
   - ❑ Code of conduct
   - ❑ Workplace harassment policy
   - ❑ Grievances policy
   - ❑ Flexible hours policy
   - ❑ Position evaluation and classification policies
   - ❑ Performance appraisal policy
   - ❑ Employee compensation and review policy and increment grid
   - ❑ Other. Please describe _____

   For each practice or policy checked above, please provide a copy of the policy or relevant document that describes the entitlement, eligibility rules, conditions and limitations etc. (if not included in the collective agreement referred to in 1. above).

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Section 3 – General Questions

1. In your opinion, what are the most common reasons why community governments may be experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff (check as many as required):

- ❑ Inability to pay competitive salaries and wages
- ❑ Inability to provide competitive benefits / pension plans
- ❑ Lack of qualified candidates
- ❑ Lack of available housing
- ❑ Other. Please describe _____

2. Please provide an estimate of the average numbers of years that a community government employee typically stays in his/her position:

- ❑ Less than six months
- ❑ Six months to one year
- ❑ One to three years
- ❑ Three to five years
- ❑ Five to ten years
- ❑ More than ten years

3. Please indicate how successful your community government has been in the last two years in attracting and retaining qualified employees?

- ❑ No success at all
- ❑ Very little success
- ❑ Somewhat successful
- ❑ Quite successful
- ❑ No problems at all

4. In your opinion, which of the following factors would most assist your community government improve its ability to attract and retain qualified employees:

- ❑ Competitive salaries (or wages)
- ❑ Benefits package
- ❑ Pension plan
- ❑ Training and professional development opportunities
- ❑ Opportunities for advancement
- ❑ Staff housing
- ❑ Other. Please describe _____

APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, *Recruitment and Retention of Municipal Staff, Workshop Report* (January 2006)

BHP Billiton Diamonds and PSAC Diamond Workers Local X3050, *Collective Agreement* (undated)

Genesis Group, *Municipal Compensation Review for the Town of Norman Wells* (June 2006)

GNWT Bureau of Statistics, *Statistics Quarterly* (March 2006)

Mark C. Ellickson and Kay Logsdon, *Determinants of Job Satisfaction of Municipal Government Employees*, State and Local Government Review, Vol.33, No.3 (Fall 2001)

Mercer Human Resource Consulting, *2006 Ontario Municipal Compensation Survey – Small Municipalities Report* (2006)

Northern Employee Benefits Services, *Group Benefits and Pension Plan Documents (various)*

Northwest Territories Power Corporation and Union of Northern Workers, *Collective Agreement* (December 31, 2007 expiry date)

Strategic Planning Branch, GNWT Department of the Executive, *2006 NWT Socio-Economic Scan* (May 2006)

Union of Northern Workers and the Government of the Northwest Territories, *Collective Agreement* (March 31, 2008 expiry date)

Copies of the Report available at www.lgant.com

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